

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 0054

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
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SUBJ: ROK GOVERNMENT'S REQUEST FOR TWO DESTROYERS

REF: A. 77 STATE 207984 (R 310241Z AUG 77)
B. 77 SEOUL 6708 (R 110326Z AUG 77)

SUMMARY: THIS MISSION RECOMMENDS APPROVAL OF ROKG'S REQUEST
TO PURCHASE TWO DESTROYERS FROM THE U.S. NAVY, PROVIDED
THAT THE NAVY IS WILLING TO RELEASE THE SHIPS. END SUMMARY.

I. THE ROK MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE ADVISES US THAT THEY
HAVE SUBMITTED, THROUGH THE LOGISTIC SERVICE MISSION OF THE
ROK EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, A REQUEST FOR LOA FOR TWO DESTROYERS
OF THE GEARING AND SUMNER CLASSES. THE SHIPS ARE PRESENTLY
OWNED BY THE U.S. NAVY, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND REJECTED A SIMILAR
REQUEST EARLIER THIS YEAR ON GROUNDS THAT THE SHIPS COULD NOT
BE SPARED. THE FOLLOWING ARE THIS MISSION'S VIEWS:

II. MILITARY REQUIREMENTS; U.N. COMMAND'S JUDGEMENT
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1. NEED FOR AND USE OF REQUESTED ITEMS--THE ROK NAVY (ROKN)
WISHES TO REPLACE TWO FLETCHER-CLASS DESTROYERS (DD'S) WITH
GEARING/SUMNER CLASS SHIPS. THEY WOULD BE USED IN CONVEN-
TIONAL DESTROYER TASKS UNTIL REPLACED, ONE IN 1981 AND
THE OTHER IN THE 1983-1986 PERIOD, BY DOMESTICALLY-PRODUCED
FRIGATES. THE WWII-VINTAGE FLETCHER-CLASS DD'S ARE BECOMING

PROHIBITIVELY EXPENSIVE TO OPERATE AND ARE SPENDING AN UNACCEPTABLE AMOUNT OF TIME IN PORT FOR MAINTENANCE. REPLACEMENT BY THE MORE MODERN GEARING/SUMNER CLASS SHIPS IS EXPECTED TO ALLEVIATE THIS SITUATION.

2. MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION--THE ROKN ALREADY OPERATES AND MAINTAINS SEVEN DESTROYERS, AND IS CAPABLE OF DOING ALL NECESSARY MAINTENANCE ON THE GEARING/SUMNER VESSELS. THE EXCHANGE OF DESTROYERS IS PROPOSED LARGELY BECAUSE IT IS EXPECTED TO RESULT IN LESS MAINTENANCE DOWN-TIME, SUBSTANTIALLY-REDUCED MAINTENANCE COSTS, AND A REDUCED NAVAL LOGISITICAL BURDEN IN THE FORM OF MUCH GREATER INTERCHANGEABILITY OF PARTS AND WEAPONS IN THE DESTROYER FLEET.

3. FINANCING--THE ROKN INTENDS TO PAY FOR THESE SHIPS WITHOUT REQUESTING SECURITY-ASSISTANCE FUNDS.

4. UNC'S JUDGEMENT--UNC VIEWS THIS PROPOSAL AS AN INTELLIGENT APPROACH TO MAINTAINING A COST-EFFECTIVE NAVAL CAPABILITY, AND STRONGLY RECOMMENDS APPROVAL.

III. EMBASSY CONCERNS--POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

1. RELATIONS TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES--THIS IS TOO MINOR
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AN ACQUISITION TO HAVE ANY EFFECT ON THE REGIONAL POLITICAL OR MILITARY BALANCE.

2. ARMS-CONTROL IMPLICATIONS--WE SEE NO DANGER OF UNAUTHORIZED THIRD-COUNTRY SALES, AS (A) THE ROKN CANNOT SPARE EITHER SHIP FROM ITS OWN FORCE FOR AN ABSOLUTE MINIMUM OF THREE YEARS, AND (B) THE ROKG HAS AN IMPECCABLE RECORD OF HONORING THIRD-COUNTRY RESALE RESTRICTIONS.

3. ECONOMIC IMPACT ON THE ROK--NET IMPACT WOULD BE FAVORABLE; ROKN'S STUDIES SHOW THE PURCHASE OF THESE TWO DD'S TO BE MORE COST-EFFECTIVE THAN CONTINUING THE OLDER SHIPS IN SERVICE FOR THE PROJECTED PERIOD OF OPERATION.

4. RELATIONSHIP TO ARMS-TRANSFER POLICY--(A) THIS SALE WOULD BE TOO MINOR TO HAVE ANY EFFECT ON REGIONAL BALANCE OR NATIONAL SECURITY. (B) THE GEARING AND SUMNER CLASS SHIPS ARE STANDARD IN THE U.S. FLEET, AND DO NOT REPRESENT ANY ESCALATION IN MILITARY TECHNOLOGY OR NAVAL CAPABILITY FOR THE ROK. THEIR TOTAL INTENDED IMPACT IS ON ECONOMY AND SIMPLICITY OF OPERATIONS.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION--WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE ANY EFFECT
ON THE LOCAL HUMAN-RIGHTS SITUATION.

6. ABILITY TO MONITOR USE OF EQUIPMENT--THE CONTINUING
PRESENCE, BEFORE AND AFTER TROOP WITHDRAWAL, OF AN
AMERICAN OVERALL COMMANDER IN KOREA GIVES THIS MISSION A
UNIQUE CAPABILITY TO MONITOR THE USE OF U.S. EQUIPMENT.

7. EMBASSY'S RECOMMENDATION--SUBJECT TO THE NAVY'S
WILLINGNESS TO RELEASE THE SHIPS, THIS MISSION IS IN
FAVOR OF THE PROPOSED TRANSFER.
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